



Family Engagement Insider

Digest 4 | April 2021

Effective Family Engagement Improves Outcomes for Students and Schools

A strategically designed family engagement program is a powerful tool for student success and school improvement.

Effective partnerships with families can have a major impact on school improvement. Engaged families contribute to improved student learning outcomes, better attendance rates, and more positive student behavior — all of which contribute to overall school improvement.

In fact, the Chicago Consortium on School Research has shown that parent and community ties can have a systemic and sustained effect on learning outcomes for children and on whole-school improvement.ⁱ

Children from Families with High Expectations Do Better in School

Research studies on the relationship between family engagement and academic achievement found that, when looking at parental supports, parents' high expectations had the strongest relationship with student academic outcomes.ⁱⁱ And, these results held true across children of all major racial backgrounds.

This means that students in homes where families believe in their child's high potential and promise do better in school than students whose families don't have high expectations of them.

The studies found that home environments with the best results for students had:

- Open lines of communication about the future
- A potent work ethic
- An environment with structure and routines
- Loving support

Make High Expectations of Students a Cornerstone Strategy

Schools can implement the following actions to leverage the power of high expectations in both the school and home environments:

- Raise teachers' expectations of students and their interest in their success — then communicate and model those same high expectations for families to have of their children.
- Have teachers and counselors encourage students to take a higher percentage of advanced placement courses — and communicate the benefits of those courses to families.
- Develop and deliver family workshops, facilitated by teachers and counselors, to learn about and discuss the many ways that families can foster and promote high expectations in the home environment.

Over 50 years of research links the various roles that families play in a child's education — as supporters of learning, encouragers of grit and determination, models of lifelong learning, and advocates of proper programming and placements for their child — with indicators of student achievement, including student grades, achievement test scores, lower drop-out rates, students' sense of personal competence and efficacy for learning, and students' beliefs about the importance of education.ⁱⁱⁱ

Student Success = School Success

How to Make Family Engagement a Workable Strategy for School Improvement

Engaging families contributes to improved student learning outcomes, attendance rates, and positive behavior, which, in turn, contribute to school improvement. Family engagement is most powerful and effective when it's integrated into all district and school goals and initiatives for student learning, including academic goals and social-emotional learning goals.

Elements of a family engagement program

A strategically designed family engagement program for schools focuses on:

- » Aligning family engagement activities with school improvement goals
- » Building relationships and trust with families
- » Offering professional learning and coaching to strengthen the capacity of all school staff to effectively engage all families in student learning and to facilitate family events
- » Measuring and analyzing your efforts
 - Sharing what you learn with school staff and families
 - Requesting feedback for improvement

Elements of effective family events

A critical component of a school's family engagement plan involves organizing family events systematically throughout the school year. These events should:

- » Be collaborative and interactive
- » Be informed by data on students' learning needs and strengths
- » Be directly connected to classroom learning and learning objectives by grade level
- » Develop families' grade-level knowledge and skills to support their children's learning
- » Model effective teaching strategies so families can use them at home
- » Provide families with opportunities to review and discuss student progress data

Activity

Aligning Family Engagement Activities with School Improvement — Quick Check

Practice/Activity	Not in Place	Early Stages	Established Practice	Evidence
1. Involve and mentor parent leaders in the development of school improvement and family engagement plans. This helps clarify the role of families in the school's continuous improvement process.				
2. Prior to the start of the year, develop a yearlong family engagement plan and calendar of activities that reflect student learning priorities specific to each grade level.				
3. Design and schedule grade-level family engagement activities to support classroom instruction and quarterly learning benchmarks.				
4. Blend academic family engagement activities with other school goals, such as social and emotional learning, behavior management, and improving school culture.				
5. Integrate Title I–required activities with your school family engagement plans to support classroom instruction and quarterly learning benchmarks.				
6. Engage parent and community organizations and partnerships (e.g., PTA/PTO, public libraries, United Way, local universities) in helping to develop and support your family engagement plan.				

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- iii Mapp, K. L. & Kuttner, P. J. (2013). *Partners in education: A dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships*. SEDL. <https://sedl.org/pubs/framework/FE-Cap-Building.pdf>